

Testimony to the Human Services Committee

March 8, 2018

**By Leslie Simoes, Executive Director
Autism Services & Resources CT**

Testimony: Raised Bill 5225 AN ACT CONCERNING THE AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER ADVISORY COUNCIL.

Thank you Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and members of the Human Services Committee for the opportunity to testify today on [Raised Bill 5255 An Act Concerning the Autism Spectrum Disorder Advisory Council.](#)

My Name is Leslie Simoes and I am the executive director of Autism Services & Resources CT or ASRC. ASRC is a 22 year old statewide advocacy organization committed to providing support and resources to individuals on the autism spectrum and their families. We started ASRC because at the time there was absolutely nothing for individuals on the spectrum that had IQ's of 70 or higher and I mean nothing. CT is one of the last states in the country that still uses the medical diagnosis of Mental Retardation of having an IQ of 69 or lower to be eligible for services. This outdated eligibility statute leaves thousands on the autism spectrum with out any support or access to lifesaving services.

ASRC has worked tirelessly to put into place the Autism Division, worked with Office of Policy and Management, The Department of Developmental Services and the Department of Social Services to create a Medicaid Waiver for adults on the spectrum with IQ's higher than 70 and have shaped the lives of thousands of families who had no where else to turn. Our history is truly a basic civil rights grassroots movement.

The Autism Spectrum Disorder Advisory Council was enacted with the core mission of advising the Department of Social Services on (1) Policies and programs for persons with autism spectrum disorder; (2) services provided by the Department of Social Services' Division of Autism Spectrum Disorder Services; and (3) implementation of the recommendations resulting from the autism feasibility study. The council may make recommendations to the

commissioner for policy and program changes to improve support services for persons with autism spectrum disorder.

At the time of its creation, the original council members believed this Advisory Council would be permanent and believed the council needed to be permanent. The newly created Autism Division needed the guidance of an Advisory Council with the expertise in Autism Spectrum Disorders. As previously stated, CT did not offer services to folks with IQ's higher than 70 therefore the Advisory Council acted as a resource, support and training tool to the Department of Developmental Services, providers and families.

The Advisory Council is a wonderful example of a successful public/private collaboration. Our past executive director and founder of ASRC has served on The Advisory Council from its inception and continues to serve today and given this intimate knowledge of the Advisory Council, ASRC is confident that its continuation is of vital importance not only the state but to the larger autism community. ASRC urges the Human Services Committee to vote favorably on Raised Bill 5255.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak today.